

City of Jacksonville

*117 W. Duval Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202*



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 13, 2025

2:00 PM

**Council Chamber,
1st Floor, City Hall**

Jacksonville Waterways Commission

CM Mike Gay, Chair

CM Ken Amaro, Vice Chair - Excused Early Departure

CM Jimmy Peluso - Excused Early Departure

CM Tyrona Clark-Murray, Alternate

Jon Michael Barker

Robert Birtalan

General Public Rep - Vacant

Representative Kiyan Michael - Excused

Mark Devereaux - Absent

Andrew Fraden

Marc Hardesty

Richard Hartley

Richard J. Redick - Excused

Jill Haskell - General Public Rep

Jack Meeks, Ex-Officio - Absent

Adam Hoyles, Ex-Officio

Rebecca Bolton, Legislative Assistant

Shannon MacGillis, Office of General Counsel

Dr. Gerard Pinto, Jacksonville University

Nayeli Jimenez, Council Research

Jim Suber, Waterways Coordinator

Meeting Convened: 2:00 PM Meeting Adjourned: 3:47 PM

1. Call To Order

2. Roll Call

Present 10 - Chair Mike Gay, Vice Chair Ken Amaro, Council Member Jimmy Peluso, Commissioner Jon Michael Barker, Commissioner Robert Birtalan, Commissioner Andrew Fraden, Commissioner Richard Hartley, Commissioner Jill Haskell, Commissioner Marc Hardesty, and Ex-Officio Adam Hoyles

Excused 2 - Commissioner Rep. Kiyan Michael, and Commissioner Richard Redick

Absent 2 - Ex-Officio Jack Meeks, and Commissioner Mark Devereaux

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Mike Gay called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees to the Waterways Commission meeting. Members introduced themselves and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the February meeting were unanimously approved by voice vote.

5. DEP Presentation

Ms. Kathryn Craver, External Affairs Director for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, provided an overview of the Environmental Resource Permitting (ERP) program, commonly referred to as ERP, and its associated regulatory framework. She noted that her role includes serving as a direct point of contact for inquiries related to specific projects in each district. She highlighted FDEP's six regional district offices, emphasizing the Northeast District based in Jacksonville, which covers 19 counties extending from Nassau County to Levy County.

Ms. Craver explained that FDEP's regulatory staff is divided into two groups:

1. Permitting – Receives and reviews applications in accordance with Florida Administrative Code.
2. Compliance – Conducts field inspections post-permit-issuance to ensure adherence to permit conditions, investigates complaints, and oversees enforcement actions.

She focused her remarks on the ERP program, which regulates work conducted in, on, or over surface waters and wetlands under Rule 62-330, F.A.C. This scope includes dock construction, shoreline stabilization, and other in-water projects. Ms. Craver noted that both FDEP and Florida's water management districts implement the ERP program based on operating agreements that allocate authority differently among the regions. The St. Johns River Water Management District typically reviews larger residential or commercial developments, while FDEP oversees single-family residential projects, dredging, and certain utility installations. She presented a three-tiered "pyramid" illustrating how FDEP evaluates permit applications.

Ms. Craver underscored that FDEP's review is intended to serve as a "one-stop shop" when possible, but some projects still necessitate direct Army Corps review. She concluded by displaying an example of a permit that included regulatory, proprietary, and federal authorizations. She also mentioned that special conditions related to manatee protection often apply to in-water work in designated habitats. She encouraged Commission members and local representatives to reach out to her or the district permitting staff with any questions about ongoing or proposed projects, reiterating her availability as a conduit for support, project updates, or regulatory guidance.

Commissioner Birtalan remarked that he resides on a private canal system and has encountered permitting challenges while repairing a failing bulkhead and undertaking repairs at an associated boat ramp. He noted that the project was halted due to the need to obtain multiple permits, including authorization from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and that the process has taken more than eight months without clear guidance. Commissioner Birtalan asked Ms. Craver to confirm whether the ERP program covers bulkhead and boat ramp repairs, adding that he has numerous additional questions.

Ms. Craver clarified that DEP may have permitting authority for bulkheads and certain shoreline stabilization efforts, though the specific requirements depend on the type of state permit involved. She noted that, if a project is categorized as an individual permit under state rules, DEP may not have delegated federal authority, so the applicant would need separate Army Corps approval. She offered to remain after the meeting to discuss details of Commissioner Birtalan's situation and invited him to share project specifics for a more in-depth conversation.

Commissioner Birtalan suggested a potential future visit to his community which is responsible for maintaining bulkheads and boat docks in the private canal system. He felt that Ms. Craver's presentation could answer many questions for property owners facing similar issues. Ms. Craver welcomed the idea, indicating her availability to provide additional information and assistance.

Chair Gay thanks Ms. Craver for doing her informative presentation.

6. Overview of the Manatee Protection Program

Mr. Eric Hinton, City Planner III, provided an overview of the City's Manatee Protection Plan (MPP), describing it as a comprehensive document designed to safeguard manatees through coordinated law enforcement, public education, boat facility signing, and habitat protection initiatives. He noted that while counties typically develop MPPs, these plans are subject to review and approval by multiple agencies, including the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Mr. Hinton explained that manatees receive protection at federal and state levels through the Marine Mammal Protection Act, Endangered Species Act, and Florida Manatee Sanctuary Act, with corresponding local provisions outlined in Chapter 387 of the Jacksonville Municipal Code. He traced the historical context of manatee protection legislation, highlighting that they have been protected since 1893, and emphasized statutory amendments in 1978 that made it unlawful to "annoy, molest, harass, or disturb" manatees. Mr. Hinton outlined core recommendations from a 1989 Department of Natural Resources report that continue to shape modern MPPs, including establishing shoreline slow-speed zones, creating manatee protection and preserve areas, restricting boat facility expansions, gathering geographic data, and promoting outreach efforts. He stated that thirteen counties (including Duval) are legally required to adopt and maintain MPPs. Duval updated its plan most recently and, according to FWC and FWS, is successfully implementing the plan's provisions.

Mr. Hinton stated that major MPP Components are 1. education, which is carried out by Jacksonville University (JU), City of Jacksonville, the Jacksonville Zoo, Save the Manatee Club, and other partners. 2. Law Enforcement: Organized by Captain Suber, who coordinates a multi-agency task force (including JSO, FWC, FWS, and US Coast Guard) and hosts public awareness events such as Media Day at the start of boating season, and 3. Boat Facility signing recommendations which is led by the City of Jacksonville in conjunction with JU. The MPP designates four zones—Special Development (purple), Preferred (green), Acceptable with Conditions (yellow), and Unacceptable (red)—each with specific slip-to-shoreline ratios. Larger slip proposals may require additional review, and FWC uses the MPP to ensure plan consistency before granting approvals. Mr. Hinton noted that JU has been integral to MPP development and ongoing execution. Their activities include, producing the annual MPP implementation report, tracking manatee-related presentations and outreach, monitoring manatee mortality data, maintaining a manatee habitat resource map and reporting signage issues, conducting aerial surveys and boat activity studies, updating the marine facility inventory, and operating the JU Manatee Hotline. Mr. Hinton stated that though the City cannot unilaterally place regulatory signage—since it is reviewed on a countywide basis—Mr. Hinton reported that approximately 25 informational signs were posted or replaced during the past year, notably at boat ramps and other water-access points. He concluded by indicating he would be available for questions regarding the MPP or any related manatee conservation efforts.

7. St. Johns River Status Report on Water Quality & Manatees

Dr. Gerard Pinto, Jacksonville University, reported that river conditions remain relatively quiet, marking the latter part of the winter dry season. He provided the following salinity readings:

- Mayport: 23–30 parts per thousand
- Dames Point: 16–19 parts per thousand
- Jacksonville University area: 11–16 parts per thousand
- Downtown: 7–10 parts per thousand
- Buckman Bridge: 1–2 parts per thousand

He noted that recent rainfall of two to four inches across the basin had slightly raised water levels, but they are now receding. Water temperatures, currently ranging from 60 to 63 degrees, are on the lower end for manatees, although several sightings have already been called in.

Dr. Pinto introduced a new feature on Jacksonville University’s “Manatee Research Center Online” webpage, which allows the public to log manatee sightings, behaviors, and even upload photos via an online form. He encouraged those who encounter manatees to submit their observations, explaining that public input helps fill data gaps beyond the limited scope of aerial surveys.

No harmful algal blooms have been recorded as of the latest sampling run (February 10–13). Dr. Pinto also noted one documented cold-stress manatee mortality in February near White Shell Bay, in addition to several mortalities in December. Statewide, there have been 14 watercraft-related manatee deaths and 191 total manatee deaths to date this year.

8. Public Comment

Mr. John Nooney mentioned the recent Jacksonville Waterways Commission meeting pertaining to river shoaling and the Artificial Reef Task Force. Mr. Nooney expressed enthusiasm for marketing local resources, referencing philanthropic opportunities to fund artificial reefs both offshore and inshore. He noted that Ordinance 2009-442 established an Artificial Reef Trust Fund and highlighted potential collaborations with the Kids Hope Alliance and the Northeast Florida Regional Council. He concluded by encouraging renewed efforts to support Pottsborg Creek access and tourist development.

9. New Business

- 2025-0087** ORD Adopting a Small-Scale Amendmnt to the FLUM Series of the 2045 Comp Plan at 7960 Arlington Expy, btwn Arlington Rd N. & Century St - (9.56± Acres) - CGC & RPI to HDR - 8000 Realco, LLC - (R.E. # 142483-0003) (Appl # L-5801-23C) (Dist. 1-Amaro) (Roberts) (LUZ) (PD & PC Apv) (JWC Apv) (Rezoning 2025-88)
2/11/25 CO Introduced: LUZ, JWC
2/19/25 LUZ Read 2nd & Rerefer
2/25/25 CO Read 2nd & Rerefer
3/11/25 CO PH Addnt'l 3/25/25
LUZ PH- 3/18/25
Public Hearing Pursuant to Sec 163.3187, F.S. & Ch 650, Pt 4, Ord Code - 3/11/25 & 3/25/25

Ed Lukacovic, Planning Department, presented Ordinance 2025-087, a small-scale land use amendment proposing to rezone 9.56 acres at 7960 Arlington Expressway from Community General Commercial and Residential Professional Institutional to High-Density Residential. He stated that the Planning Commission reviewed the application on March 6, City Council opened its review on March 11, and the Land Use and Zoning Committee is scheduled to examine it on March 18, with the final City Council public hearing set for March 25. The site includes only 0.2 acres of wetlands and is within the Strawberry Creek and Arlington River drainage basins. Mr. Lukacovic explained that under the current zoning, the site could accommodate up to 170,842 square feet of commercial space or 372 multifamily residential units. Under the proposed High-Density Residential zoning, it could allow up to 773 multifamily units with a density of 60 units per acre. The site is surrounded by high-density residential, medium-density residential, and commercial properties, with additional public facilities such as schools and parks nearby. The property is currently developed with two large buildings fronting Arlington Expressway and a parking lot between them and the Strawberry Creek wetland buffer. The proposal seeks to repurpose the site for residential use. He presented aerial views and flood zone maps, explaining that while the site has varying flood zone designations, approximately one-third of the property falls outside any flood zone. The remaining portion is within AE 100-year flood zones and AE floodway zones, where flooding events can include velocity-driven water. Mr. Lukacovic noted that FEMA flood maps sometimes contain inaccuracies, and a corrected version of the floodway boundary places it farther south at the edge of the parking lot. He also explained that the coastal high hazard area designation does not encroach on the property, as the application was submitted before the adoption of the 2021 updated map. Regarding drainage, he stated that the property is within the Strawberry Creek drainage basin, which connects to Pottsburg Creek, then the Arlington River, and finally the St. Johns River.

Commissioner Barker commented that the property has been an eyesore for over a decade, comparing its condition to a "zombie apocalypse movie set" and urging swift action to facilitate redevelopment.

Commissioner Fraden asked whether drainage from the parking lot currently drains into the creek or is directed to a retention pond. Mr. Lukacovic confirmed that it drains directly into the creek. Commissioner Fraden followed up, asking whether the redevelopment would alter drainage conditions. Mr. Lukacovic stated that if impervious surface area increased, stormwater retention would be required, but since the site is already fully developed, he did not anticipate significant changes in runoff.

Chair Gay inquired whether retention ponds would be required to capture stormwater from the redevelopment. Mr. Lukacovic responded that, since the site consists primarily of rooftop and blacktop surfaces and no additional impervious area is being added, retention ponds would likely not be required. However, he noted that the redevelopment might include landscaping improvements, which could slightly reduce runoff by absorbing some water.

2025-0144

ORD Transferring \$32,500 from the Mayport Waterfront Partnership/Subsidies & Contributions to Private Org to OED - Industry Dev/Repairs & Maintenance to Increase the Budget for Add'l Repairs & Improvements Under that Certain Grant Agrmt Previously Authd by Ord 2024-476-E btwn the City & Mayport Waterfront, Inc. d/b/a Mayport Waterfront Partnership (MWP); Prov for Carryover to 9/30/26; Apv, & Auth the Mayor, or Her Desig, & the Corp Sec to Execute & Deliver an Amdt 1 to Grant Agrmt (Amendment One) btwn the City & MWP, to: (1) Transfer \$32,500 from the Grant Prog to Auth an Increase of \$32,500 for Add'l Repairs & Maintenance within Mayport Village Pursuant to the Agrmt; (2) Modify the City's Schedule for Disbursement of the City Funds; (3) Extend the Term of the Agrmt by 12 Months, to 9/30/26; & (4) Make Other Modifications to the Budget in the Agrmt as Set 4th in the Amdt 1 Authd Hereby (B.T. 25-052) (Sawyer) (Req of Mayor) (JWC Apv)

2/25/25 CO Introduced: NCSPHS, F, JWC

3/3/25 NCSPHS Read 2nd & Rerefer

3/4/25 F Read 2nd & Rerefer

3/11/25 CO PH Read 2nd & Rerefer

Public Hearing Pursuant to Ch 166, F.S. & C.R. 3.601 - 3/11/25

Wendy Khan, Office of Economic Development, stated that she was filling in for Ed Randolph and if they had any questions to ask her.

Chair Gay acknowledged the presence of former Mayor of Atlantic Beach and current Chair of the Mayport Waterfront, Mitch Reeves, noting that he was available to provide insight if needed. A motion to approve was made and seconded. The Commission voted unanimously in favor via a voice vote.

10. Old Business**a. Approval of Watercraft Legislation**

Motion to consider and 2nd was approved. Shannon MacGillis, Office of General Counsel, confirmed that the Commission had received the full 123-page draft electronically due to its length. She reminded the Commission that she previously presented an outline of the legislation in November, and this draft reflects those discussions. Ms. MacGillis stated that some language adjustments were still in progress due to recent legislative changes impacting certain city divisions, particularly on pages 18, 19, and 67. She clarified that the earliest date for the legislation to be filed would be April 2 and offered to meet with any Commission member to review the draft in detail before that deadline.

Commissioner Barker commended the thoroughness of the draft, noting that its specificity would make enforcement more efficient for law enforcement and regulatory agencies. He emphasized the need for this legislation, citing another derelict boat discovered at Simpson Park within the past week. Mr. Barker remarked that while the process of crafting this legislation had been longer and more complex than anticipated, it was a necessary step to address persistent watercraft issues.

Mr. Adam Hoyles stated that he had reviewed the draft and was impressed with its level of detail. He acknowledged the efforts to close loopholes that had previously allowed violators to evade enforcement by making minor adjustments, such as moving vessels slightly. Mr. Hoyles also appreciated the balance struck between protecting boat owners and ensuring clear enforcement guidelines, noting that a significant portion of the legislation focused on notification procedures. He anticipated that the Environmental Protection Board would play a role in hearing cases involving contested violations.

Ms. MacGillis confirmed that she would be attending the Environmental Protection Board's Water Committee meeting on March 24 as part of the process to finalize the legislation.

Commissioner Barker addressed concerns about the time required for enforcement under the new framework, suggesting that the clear violation structure and step-by-step enforcement process would actually increase efficiency and fairness rather than create delays.

Commissioner Birtalan expressed appreciation for the effort put into the legislation, noting that it had been a long time coming. He emphasized the importance of law enforcement's involvement in crafting the legislation and their commitment to enforcing it once enacted.

Chair Gay acknowledged the extensive work that had gone into drafting the legislation and confirmed that no immediate action was required at this moment. MacGillis clarified that a motion and second had been made to approve the draft, with the understanding that minor scrivener's changes and clarifications on oversight responsibilities were still being finalized. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the draft for presentation to City Council.

Ms. MacGillis then asked whether Council Members Gay, Peluso, and Amaro wished to be listed as co-introducers of the legislation. Chair Gay confirmed that he wanted to be listed, as did Council Member Peluso. Chair Gay stated that she should follow up with Council Member Amaro to confirm his position.

b. St. Johns River Accord Task Force

Council Member Peluso stated that until they get the CBA deal done he will focus more on the River Accord.

c. Shoaling and Artificial Reef Task Force

Commissioner Hardesty provided an update on the recent meeting held in the Lynwood Roberts Room at 10:00 AM, which focused on shoaling issues and artificial reef development. He reported that Representative Bryan Campbell from Congressman Aaron Bean's office attended and provided insight into federal efforts to address shoaling. Congressman Bean expressed strong interest in securing funds to prevent and remediate shoaling and is actively working on solutions. The meeting also revealed that the Army Corps of Engineers is no longer depositing dredge spoil at the Palms Fish Camp site but is instead dumping it offshore. This new information alters the focus of prior studies, as the original assumption was that spoil deposits caused shoaling between Clapboard Creek and out east. Mr. Hardesty stated that they are now drafting specific questions for NOAA and the Army Corps of Engineers to confirm and clarify these changes to prevent further delays. Regarding artificial reefs, Mr. Hardesty stated that significant progress has been made. Melissa Long from the City's Environmental Division has played a key role in facilitating the next steps. An application is now in progress with assistance from Joe Kistel, an expert in artificial reef projects, who previously presented to the Commission. Mr. Hardesty emphasized that grant applications for artificial reefs are highly technical and require detailed surveys and planning, which is why an expert was engaged. Initially, the city was planning to apply for \$60,000 in funding from FWC's Artificial Reef Program, but they received an update encouraging them to apply for \$120,000 instead, a substantial opportunity.

Mr. Hardesty noted that since 2009, the City of Jacksonville has not invested in artificial reefs, and all recent reefs have been privately funded. He explained that in the past, Jacksonville led the state in artificial reef development and offshore fishing, but it has since fallen behind. Jacksonville has 103 artificial reefs, compared to Nassau County (18), St. Johns County (40), Flagler County (14), and Volusia County (177). The disparity is even greater when compared to five Gulf Coast counties (Bay, Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, and Walton), which together have 1,185 artificial reefs. Hardesty stressed that artificial reefs provide an economic boost for tourism, commercial fishing, and recreational diving, with a statewide economic impact of \$3.1 billion.

Mr. Hardesty credited Chair Gay's involvement in advancing discussions and noted that the Jacksonville Offshore Sport Fishing Club has pledged \$2,500 to fund Joe Kistel's work on the grant application. He explained that city staff lack the necessary expertise to complete such technical grant applications, making Kistel's role essential. The grant application deadline is Friday, March 21, and letters of support will strengthen Jacksonville's application. Since City Council is implied to support the project, Hardesty encouraged individual commissioners to submit personal letters of support, which would positively impact the grant evaluation.

The first reef project will focus on Harm's Ledge, an artificial reef that has degraded over time. The plan includes rehabilitating and expanding the reef to improve habitat quality. Mr. Hardesty expressed optimism about local businesses' support, noting that Arlington Bait and Tackle, Strike Zone, and Browns Creek Fish Camp have all endorsed the initiative. He also advocated for including \$250,000 in the city budget for future reef projects, explaining that city-matching funds significantly increase the likelihood of securing state and federal grants. Other counties have already leveraged such funds to expand their reef programs, and FWC officials have confirmed that they receive very little engagement from Jacksonville regarding reef funding.

Chair Gay expressed appreciation for Mr. Hardesty's efforts and committed to personally writing a letter of support. He encouraged other commissioners to do the same.

Councilman Peluso inquired whether funding from the Tourist Development Council (TDC) had been considered. Mr. Hardesty responded that it had not yet been explored. Mr. Peluso explained that the TDC, which includes 3 Council Members, allocates tourism tax funds to projects that promote tourism, including sports tournaments and major events. He suggested that artificial reefs align with TDC

priorities and recommended approaching Visit Jacksonville and the beach municipalities, which would benefit from increased offshore tourism. Mr. Peluso proposed pursuing funding from multiple sources to cover the estimated \$250,000 needed for reef expansion.

Mr. Hardesty welcomed the idea and expressed interest in working with Mr. Peluso to explore TDC funding. However, he emphasized that the March 21 deadline required them to submit the FWC grant first before seeking additional funding sources. Missing this deadline would delay the project for an entire year, so the priority is securing the initial funding before expanding efforts.

Commissioner Birtalan requested that contact information for submitting letters of support be distributed to the Commission. Mr. Hardesty confirmed that Brittany would send an email with the necessary details, including a pre-drafted form letter that individuals can complete and submit.

Chair Gay reiterated appreciation for the efforts made by Melissa Long and others in advancing this initiative within a short time frame.

Chair Gay informed the commission that he had recently been approached by members of the community who were concerned about the FWC's proposal to open the Pumpkin Hill Preserve to commercial shrimping. The sports fishing community strongly opposes this decision, fearing it will negatively impact the fishery and destroy fishing opportunities in the area. Chair Gay had previously sent a letter requesting FWC to pause the decision to allow for further discussion, but FWC did not pause and has moved to the next stage of approval. Another meeting on the matter is scheduled for March, and Chair Gay asked the commission to consider issuing a formal statement opposing the opening of Pumpkin Hill to commercial shrimping.

Commissioner Hartley moved that the commission oppose opening Pumpkin Hill to commercial shrimping, and the motion was seconded.

Ms. MacGillis suggested drafting a formal resolution instead of a letter, which would be prepared in time for the next council cycle on Wednesday.

Commissioner Barker expressed support but wanted more information before taking a definitive stance. He suggested that the resolution should formally request FWC to pause and provide further clarification before proceeding with the decision. He emphasized that the Waterways Commission has a mandate to review and address environmental impacts and should use its authority to demand more transparency from FWC.

Chair Gay agreed, noting that he had already sent a request for a pause, but FWC had moved forward anyways. He acknowledged that the community and fishing groups were highly engaged in opposing this measure and that local talk radio had also raised awareness on the issue.

Mr. Barker stressed that FWC should not ignore local leadership, particularly since Chair Gay is the district's councilmember. He suggested that the commission should formally request FWC to come before them and explain the decision.

Ms. MacGillis asked for clarification on whether the motion should reflect Barker's amendment, ensuring that the resolution requests FWC to pause the decision and provide a formal briefing to the commission before moving forward. Mr. Hartley agreed.

Captain Suber asked about the timeline for FWC's decision.

Chair Gay stated that FWC had not paused the process and was moving forward with approval, with a final vote scheduled for May. The meeting location for the final vote was not yet determined. He suggested that if the vote is set for May, the commission should invite FWC to its April meeting for discussion before the final decision.

Ms. MacGillis asked whether the commission wanted to defer the vote on the resolution until April, to allow for an FWC presentation.

Mr. Peluso recommended that the commission authorize the drafting of the resolution now and formally vote on it in April, allowing time to notify FWC that the commission is taking a stand on the issue. This would also give FWC an opportunity to present their case before the vote.

Chair Gay agreed and opened the floor for further questions.

Mr. Hardesty asked Dr. Pinto whether Jacksonville University's marine science program had any input or data related to FWC's proposal and whether the university had any concerns.

Dr. Pinto responded that this was the first time he was hearing about the proposal. While he had no specific data on the impact, he stated that commercial shrimping is known to negatively affect the environment and recreational fishing. Dr. Pinto agreed that FWC should present data on why this change is being proposed and said JU would be willing to provide support if necessary.

Commissioner Fraden asked for clarification on the Pumpkin Hill Preserve waterway. He wanted to know the size and navigability of the area, particularly in relation to allowing large shrimp boats.

Chair Gay explained that Pumpkin Hill flows into Nassau Sound and is part of a larger preserve system.

He estimated that smaller shrimp boats, rather than ocean-going vessels, would operate in the area. He estimated the navigable range to be between two to five miles, but exact details were unclear.

Mr. Fraden asked whether shrimp boats are currently prohibited from entering Pumpkin Hill.

Chair Gay confirmed that they are currently restricted and can only operate in Nassau Sound. The proposed change would allow them to enter the preserve, raising concerns about environmental damage and competition with recreational fishing.

Commissioner Birtalan expressed concern that the commission was only now hearing about this issue and emphasized that such significant decisions should come before the Waterways Commission much earlier. He supported bringing FWC in for a full discussion to ensure an informed vote.

Chair Gay acknowledged that the FWC's decision had progressed rapidly and that he had only recently learned about it. He reiterated that the fishing community is strongly opposed and that the commission should act quickly to engage with FWC before it's too late.

Ms. MacGillis asked for clarification on the specific content of the resolution. She proposed that the resolution should include:

- A statement of the Waterways Commission's authority under Jacksonville's ordinance code.
- A formal opposition to the proposed FWC decision.
- A request for FWC to pause the decision and provide a presentation to the Waterways Commission.

Chair Gay agreed and emphasized the need to act quickly.

Mr. Hardesty suggested that the resolution not only state opposition but also highlight that FWC had ignored the commission's authority and attempted to move forward without consulting them. He believed this would increase the impact of the resolution.

Mr. Barker advised keeping the resolution direct and forceful, ensuring that FWC takes the commission's concerns seriously. He supported Mr. Hardesty's argument but preferred to frame it strategically, so FWC would be more likely to engage rather than dismiss the resolution outright.

Mr. Hardesty stated that FWC would likely ignore the commission anyway, so it was necessary to state a strong position.

Chair Gay agreed that the resolution should emphasize that the commission was not consulted and that the city has a vested interest in protecting its waterways.

Ms. Haskell asked whether Jacksonville has a representative on the FWC board.

Chair Gay responded that he may know someone on the board, but he would need to confirm.

Ms. Haskell suggested that the commission reach out to its FWC representative to ensure local concerns are addressed.

Chair Gay agreed and committed to pursuing every possible avenue to prevent commercial shrimping in Pumpkin Hill.

Ms. MacGillis confirmed the resolution's final language:

- It would outline the Waterways Commission's authority.
- It would state opposition to the FWC's decision.
- It would request an official pause and an FWC presentation at the next meeting.

Ms. MacGillis recommended filing the resolution as an emergency to ensure it reaches FWC before the May vote.

Mr. Barker asked if the resolution must go through City Council before submission.

Ms. MacGillis confirmed that all resolutions must be filed with City Council before they can be sent.

Mr. Barker asked whether there was any way to bypass City Council and issue a direct statement from the Waterways Commission.

Ms. MacGillis stated that there was no alternative—the resolution must be approved by City Council before being officially filed.

Chair Gay called for a motion to amend Mr. Hartley's motion to reflect the final resolution. The amendment was moved and seconded.

The amendment was approved, and the final motion, as amended, was also approved.

Chair Gay thanked the commissioners for their work, emphasizing that this issue is critical for Jacksonville's waterways. He committed to bringing FWC representatives to the April meeting and gathering as much information as possible before the final vote in May.

With no further comments, Chair Gay adjourned the meeting.

11. Adjournment

Pursuant to the American with Disabilities Act, accommodations for persons with disabilities are available upon request. Please allow 1-2 business days notification to process; last minute requests will be accepted; but may not be possible to fulfill. Please contact Disabled Services Division at: V 904-255-5466, TTY-904-255-5476, or email your request to KaraT@coj.net.

Minutes: Nayeli Jimenez- Council Research Division

njimenez1@coj.net 904-255-5140

Posted: 03/14/2025 5:00 PM